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ABSTRACT

The creation of publicly financed but relatively independent public charter schools may be the most vibrant force in American education today. This fastback presents findings of a national study that examined the outcomes of charter schools. Data were collected through site visits to 43 charter schools in 7 states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin); case studies conducted at 35 of the charter schools; and 700 interviews with individuals in those schools and communities. Data for 1996-97 show that one-half of charter-school students are members of minority groups. Founders of charter schools encountered several barriers to starting up, including: special-needs students, finance, time for planning, staffing, the unaccustomed features of being public schools, regulatory hurdles, and interest-group opposition. The booklet offers examples of accountability mechanisms in various states and findings of other studies. A dilemma for charter-school administrators is that sometimes a discrepancy exists between curriculum and state evaluation. Policymaking options for failing charter schools are also described. (LMI)

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The authors dedicate this fastback to all those who have educated them on the charter schools movement.

Copies of the full report, *Charter Schools in Action: What Have We Learned?* are available by calling 1-800-HUDSON-0 or from the web site of the Educational Excellence Network at **http://www.edexcellence.net**.

Series Editor, Donovan R. Walling

Charter School Accountability: Findings and Prospects

by
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Introduction

The creation of publicly financed but (mostly) independent public charter schools may be the most vibrant force in American education today. So we concluded in a recent national study of these schools conducted by the Hudson Institute and sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Fieldwork in 1995-96 consisted of site visits to 43 of these institutions in seven states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin), as well as detailed data-gathering on 35 of them, a cross-section of the approximately 225 charter schools then operating nationwide. (That number has since grown to approximately 500 schools in 16 states and the District of Columbia.) Our work included more than 700 interviews with individuals in these schools and communities. The result is the most in-depth, "face-to-face" information currently available on the U.S. charter school movement.

We begin by offering an overview of what charter schools are accomplishing and the implementation problems that their founders confront as they establish

these schools. This discussion offers a context for the more detailed discussion on the present status and meaning of, as well as prospects for, charter school accountability.

Accomplishments

The most remarkable — and to some, surprising — finding of our study is that charter schools are not havens for the "best and brightest." Rather, they are serving large numbers of poor, troubled, and minority children. According to our 1996-97 data, half of charter school students are minority group members (versus one-third in conventional public schools). Results from a new U.S. Department of Education study of charter schools confirm our finding. In the words of that report, "Charter schools serve a diverse student population." U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley comments, "This diversity is good news, because minority and low-income families have a real need to benefit from promising innovations in public education" (Office of Research and Development 1997).

These findings contradict the conventional wisdom of many who predicted that only the fortunate — the "cream" — will choose charter schools for their children. Based on this information, no one can fairly say that charter schools are "creaming" the smartest, most motivated, and most successful kids. A more accurate statement is that most of the nation's charter schools are

dealing with a lot of "milk" that the regular dairy can not or will not handle.

Nearly all charter schools are either "conversions" — preexisting public or, less commonly, private schools transformed into charter schools — or "start-ups" — new schools, born with their charters, which would not otherwise exist. There also are hybrids, such as a preschool that, with the help of its charter, was able to transform itself into an elementary school.

The founders of these schools have taken seriously the charge and the opportunity to innovate. The charter movement has thereby unleashed the educational imaginations of a diverse band of people and organizations committed to recasting what a school can be — not tomorrow, but today.

We sort these charter founders into three groups. One important group is educators — teachers and others — who want to do things differently, who are frustrated in their educational vision and goals by the stifling bureaucracy of conventional schools. Many are professionals who have long dreamt of running their own school their own way.

City on a Hill charter school in Boston illustrates this phenomenon. It was founded by two public school teachers, both of whom had worked in the Chelsea district. They reached the point, as one of them says, where "I was banging my head against the wall. The time had come to try something different. The charter law gave us the freedom to start from scratch and do what we had often talked about doing."

They applied for a charter and opened as a grade 9-10 school enrolling 65 students, half of them African-

American and a fifth from other minorities. The school is located in a large YMCA near Northeastern University and has partnerships with several nearby cultural institutions: the Huntington Theater, the Boston Ballet, and the famed Boston Symphony. It has a core curriculum, a focus on civic education, and a waiting list; and it will gradually expand to grades 7-12 and a total enrollment of about 225.

Other examples of teacher-initiated charter schools include Sierra Leone Educational Outreach Academy in Detroit, whose founders are former special education teachers frustrated by the "dumping ground" aspect of traditional special education programs, and St. Paul's City Academy — the nation's first charter school — begun by teachers who know that the traditional education system does little to retrieve those who dropped (or were pushed) out of school.

A second group of charter founders consists of parents who seek something different and, they hope, better for their children. These parents have not found satisfaction in their school systems, and yet in many cases they can not afford private schools. Some are liberal, some conservative; they vary widely in educational priorities; but all share an abiding will to ensure that their daughters and sons get the best possible education.

An example of a parent-initiated start-up is Oakland (formerly Jingletown) Charter Academy in California. Oakland parents whose children attended Lazear Elementary wanted their youngsters to be able to go on to a middle school that was safe from the drugs and violence they saw in other local schools. They approached

Clementina Duron, then principal of Lazear, to help them start a charter school.

After intense union and board opposition, the school finally was created, with Ms. Duron as its principal. Eighty-five percent of its students are Latino. Although the bitter battles surrounding its founding left scars, the Jingletown saga shows what can be accomplished when energized parents team up with sage and courageous educators. The Jingletown parents are so pleased with the results — no gang fights or other violence and students engaged in academics — that they now are pushing to expand it to grade 10.

Or consider little Emily Charter School in rural Minnesota, where the entire town rallied to stop the closing of its elementary school by converting it to charter status and successfully operate it on a slim budget, which the neighboring school district said could not be done. Or Renaissance School in Douglas County, Colorado, the "progressive" charter school in a fast-growing suburb that already had two "traditional" charter schools. Renaissance School serves families who want individualized education and multi-age groupings, and it has been negotiating an arrangement with the developer of an office park to build a facility for the charter school to lease.

The last group of charter founders comprises "third parties" who, for various reasons, want to start or operate schools of their own. Some are nonprofit organizations, some profit-seeking small businesses or large corporations, some multiservice community groups, such as the Urban League. All are taking advantage of the opportunity afforded by the charter law to put their ideas into practice.

Livingston Technical Academy in Lowell, Michigan, is one such school. Started by a group of individuals representing various manufacturing firms in the community, it provides 11th- and 12th-grade students with hands-on technical skills and experience. It is one of several "trade academy" charter schools that received start-up grants from Governor John Engler's Jobs Commission. Operating on the campus of a local college, the school is viewed by many as doing what vocational programs should have been doing all along — a full eight-hour day of integrated academics and occupational skills combined with 10 weeks a year of apprenticeship training.

Another example is the Mesa Arts (formerly Boys and Girls) Academy in Arizona, initiated by a local boys/girls club (and spearheaded by the state attorney general) to provide better education for middle school youngsters in a disadvantaged neighborhood of Mesa and to take advantage of the club's capacious new facility during hours when it would not otherwise be used.

Types of Schools

Though charter laws differ greatly — some are far more generous than others in conferring true autonomy on individual schools — every law requires charter applicants to address a fairly standard set of issues and questions. These typically include written descriptions of the proposed school's educational program and methods, assessment tools, budget plans, staffing arrangements, student recruitment strategies, and other major concerns.

Notwithstanding the uniform questions and categories on the charter application, what has emerged across the land hardly resembles a one-size-fits-all model. Indeed, there are places where two very different kinds of charter schools operate within a few blocks of each other.

Most of these schools struck us as having developed sound educational strategies, some of which we had not previously come across. The following four types of schools serve to illustrate the point, though they certainly do not span the full range of innovations we observed, either in their instructional methods and curriculum or in such areas as governance, financing, staffing, and scheduling.

Schools for special populations. According to the Education Commission of the States, approximately half of all U.S charter schools were created primarily to serve at-risk youngsters (Medler and Nathan 1995). Our impression is similar. Nonetheless, we found much variety among the individuals, groups, and institutions that have come together to create such schools. They include social service and juvenile correction agencies, neighborhood-based groups, postsecondary institutions, and private businesses.

Lowell Middlesex Academy, for example, is sponsored by a community college in Massachusetts. It enrolls 100 high school dropouts, nearly all of them long gone from the conventional public school system. The Charter School of San Diego is actually 15 sites around the city, covering 253 square miles and spanning the equivalent of grades 6-12. It targets urban youth who are not succeeding in conventional classrooms. Arizona's Success School also is a multisite program for troubled young people, many of whom are teenagers on parole or probation from the state juvenile corrections system and who have had very little success — and are generally no longer welcome — in ordinary schools.

Distance learning and home schooling. Although few in number, our sample offered several opportunities to see "virtual" schools that not only lack any resemblance to transitional schools but, in fact, can scarcely be called "places" at all. For example, the Choice 2000 On-Line School in Perris, California, is "open" for students 24 hours a day. It is a technological version of a one-room

schoolhouse, except that this room has hardware, software, phone lines, and a few teachers on the premises. Its students — who live all over California — attend mostly by computer.

A comparable program is Horizons Instructional Program in Lincoln, California, which targets its services to those who want an alternative to classroom-based instruction. It provides home-based learning programs and supplemental education projects centered on the state's program of independent study, portions of which are delivered via satellite or online.

Teacher cooperatives. In LeSueur, Minnesota, the New Country School has no employees as such. Rather, the governing board — a majority of whose members must by charter law be teachers — has contracted with EdVisions Cooperative, a group of teachers and others, for its educational and management services. Besides having no conventional employees of its own, the school offers a highly innovative, competency-based, individualized approach to learning.

Contract schools. Teacher cooperatives are not the only entities that provide contract services to charter schools. Private firms manage major — occasionally all — elements of some schools' educational and business affairs. Boston Renaissance Charter School involves two for-profit organizations — the Edison Project and Advantage Schools — and the citizen-based Horace Mann Foundation.

Particularly attractive features of charter schools include their intimate scale; clear, focused missions;

freedom from burdensome regulations; and the fact that students, teachers, and parents have chosen to be there. Most of what they are accomplishing also is done for less money than in conventional schools.

Start-Up Problems for Schools and Policy Makers

Charter schools are grappling with a number of start-up problems. Some of these problems the schools need to anticipate and solve for themselves. Others can not be resolved satisfactorily without state or federal policy action. What follows is a brief summary of these two domains.

Common Start-Up Problems

A number of problems can arise in concert with the organizing of a charter school:

Kids with problems. More than half of the charter schools we visited had unexpectedly difficult challenges from the students who attend them, primarily from large numbers of disadvantaged and at-risk pupils. In fact, a high proportion of charter students can be termed "square peg" kids who do not fit the round holes of conventional public schools. While the challenges these students present are often grave enough to cause significant concern, charter schools, in general, welcome

such youngsters and adapt to their circumstances — even if it means major efforts at staff retooling — and serve them well.

The business side. Charter schools are as much small businesses as education institutions, yet rare is the school whose staff is adept at both. Finance, marketing, accounting, procurement, personnel management, complex logistical planning, and compliance with sundry local and state rules can cripple a school that has an outstanding curriculum and terrific teaching staff. Even when it has a good business manager, the charter school may run afoul of zoning restrictions, fire marshal inspections, and extensive state reporting requirements. Charter schools, then, have peculiar leadership needs that should be met by a diverse team of individuals, some of whom should have substantial savvy in non-education domains.

Planning time. Many charter schools started too quickly, sometimes because it was already summer by the time their charter arrived. Often as not, the delay was caused by the prolonged political battles they had to fight to get their charter or to the frenzy of a "competitive" process for obtaining one of the limited number of charters permitted under state law. Sometimes, however, the problem is also a result of charter planners not anticipating how much they would have to do and how long this would take. After scrambling for facilities, staff, and students, they sometimes find they have not taken enough pains with curriculum, materials, training, orientation, and the innumerable logistical hassles of running a school (for example, pupil transportation).

Adequate planning time, then, is an important ingredient in the recipe for a successful charter school launch.

Founders, governance, and staffing. Charter founders, particularly when they are non-educators, sometimes have difficulty turning over the reins to the educators they recruit to lead and staff the school. Sometimes they do a bad job of selecting the first group of educators. And sometimes they hire some of their own to be part of the school's new staff. Troubled governance relations of this kind can cause grave difficulties for charter schools where they arise, with poor board-staff relations appearing to be the most common governance difficulty. Moreover, some charter schools encounter staffing problems, especially in achieving a proper "fit" between personnel needs and individual staff members. Knowing this, perhaps more charter founders can impose the requisite discipline on themselves, and perhaps more of the people they employ can insist on some ground rules in advance.

Unaccustomed features of being public schools. Where private school conversions are permitted, and in situations where private organizations find themselves running charter schools, there sometimes turn out to be unexpected side-effects of creating — or evolving into — public schools. Examples include open-meeting laws for governing boards, competitive procurement processes, due process procedures for staff, and curriculum issues (for example, the need to teach the state core, prohibitions of religiosity). Charter founders need to do their homework in this area.

Policy Problems Affecting Start-Ups

Problems that arise from policy issues also affect the initiation and development of charter schools:

Fiscal woes and finance policies. Fiscal issues often cause the greatest difficulties for new charter schools. These issues include lack of capital funds; little (if any) start-up funds; reduced operating funds due to failure to receive the full complement of federal, state, or local dollars; uneven cash flow; burdensome paperwork associated with student enrollment counts and bookkeeping procedures; and school finance formulas that are not sensitive to the circumstances of charter schools. All this leads to most charter schools receiving less funding than conventional public schools receive, even though charter schools are expected to demonstrate better results. Moreover, charter sponsorship and oversight usually carry real costs for districts and states. In sum, serious support of charter schools will entail revising many aspects of U.S. public education finance.

Regulatory and political hurdles. Most charter laws still make it needlessly difficult to launch viable schools. Some restrictions (for example, quotas for schools or students) arise in response to political pressure from charter opponents. Others come from inadvertent failure to eliminate or waive burdensome statutory and regulatory provisions. Far from being turned loose with public funds to do whatever they like with no accountability, as critics allege, our dominant impression is that charter schools in most states continue to be burdened by myriad rules and procedures. Automatic exemption from

nearly all federal and state laws and rules, and the streamlining of compliance-related paperwork, are necessary preconditions for innovative charter schools to flourish.

Local board sponsorship concerns. Except in a few jurisdictions where charter schools are directly sponsored by the state itself or by universities, people seeking charters must invest immense amounts of time and energy in trying to convince local school boards to approve their proposals. The political battles can be so intense that, after winning their charter, the school's founders find themselves weary, frazzled, and with just a few weeks before the school is due to open. While some local board involvement is a good thing, even those charter schools that succeed in obtaining sponsorship by their local board frequently wind up in a strained (or openly hostile) relationship with it. And in places where local boards have the upper hand — as in California and Colorado — many resources are expended, sometimes fruitlessly, in the quest for charters. In short, having to negotiate approval with the local district seldom works to the charter school's advantage. Granting full legal, fiscal, and program autonomy by law appears to be best.

General state charter policies. Charter schools are more likely to flourish in states with "stronger" charter laws. The most important characteristics of these laws are sponsorship options other than local school boards, openness to diverse charter applicants, automatic exemption from laws and regulation, and true legal, fiscal, and program autonomy.

Special education. Federal and state special education laws, regulations, procedures, and enforcement mech-

anisms are ill-suited to charter schools, many of which were created to serve at-risk students. These bureaucratic complications embody the dominant education culture against which charter schools have reacted. Moreover, as a matter of philosophy, many charter schools have individual learning contracts with every one of their pupils, rejecting the practice of creating IEPs for some students but not for others. For these reasons it seems dysfunctional to force charter schools to comply with the array of special education requirements.

Teacher unions and charter schools. While relations between charters schools and teacher unions take many forms at the building level, at the state level — without exception — we found that the unions' primary objective vis-à-vis charter schools is to keep the program as limited as possible. Even though both major teacher unions now voice mild endorsement of the charter concept, they hedge it with many restrictions. Moreover, we know that many of the best charter schools were founded by teachers to escape from the shackles that union-bargained master contracts had imposed. If the charter movement grows with its essential attributes intact, it will inevitably threaten the central tenets of today's unions. Alternatively, policy makers may succumb to the unions' immense political pressure to create "Potemkin" laws that display the facade but not the reality of true charter legislation.

Federal policy issues. The truly consequential federal policy issues bearing on charter schools have to do with how much such schools and their students benefit from the major categorical aid programs — and how much

they are handicapped by federal red tape. The truth is that many features of federal education programs are poorly suited to charter schools. The result is that most charter schools are not now getting their "share" of federal categorical aid. This is especially disheartening because, in a number of cases, charter schools are carrying out the spirit of federal programs without following all the fine print. Until and unless Washington policy makers come to understand that the basic precepts of their aid programs are inappropriate to charter schools and other forms of reinvented public education, this fundamental mismatch will persist. The fact that Washington now also has a small program to aid charter schools with start-up costs does not solve the fundamental problem.

Charter Schools: Accountable for Results

Those who start charter schools are engaged in what former U.S. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander called "old-fashioned horse-trading," swapping rules and regulations for results. Being directly accountable for the results of student performance — and free to achieve them pretty much however they like — is a combination rarely seen in conventional public schools. In that combination lies much of the appeal and much of the promise of charter schools. In the words of a Massachusetts charter school principal, "Everyone here believes that this school has got to deliver good academic results or we shouldn't exist."

This approach to judging educational quality — according to what students actually achieve, what they know and can do — diverges sharply from the decades-old conventional wisdom that quality is properly gauged by inputs, services, resources, and intentions. While most of the education establishment still upholds the older approach, the charter movement's emphasis on results has won widespread support among policy makers and the lay public.

Those same policy makers and laymen legitimately want to know if their continuing support is warranted, whether the greater freedom given to charter schools yields stronger educational results than those produced by conventional public schools. It is not unreasonable for them to expect hard evidence at the "macro" level.

Moreover, at the "micro" level, decisions made by the chartering authorities about renewing or terminating individual schools, allowing those schools to grow, to open branches or reproduce themselves, etc. — all these decisions should flow from actual evidence, not just reputation, connections, or evocative rhetoric.

There is, then, no more fundamental charter school issue for policy makers than ensuring that a thoughtful and well-founded accountability and evaluation strategy is formulated for both the "macro" and "micro" decisions to be made about these schools.

How should charter schools be accountable? On what basis should their performance be appraised? What must policy makers do to ensure that timely, valid, and reliable evidence is available for evaluating them? What accountability efforts are now under way? What should be the stance of policy makers to faltering charter schools?

Stronger in Theory than in Practice

Many state charter laws are strong on theory when it comes to accountability and evaluation. They acknowledge the horse-trade that swaps rules and regulations for results. Typically, they establish three general criteria for holding charter schools publicly accountable:

- Reasonable progress on meeting the school's own goals for its students;
- Standards of fiscal management concerning the proper use of public funds; and
- General probity and avoidance of scandal.

Many laws require charter schools to produce an annual report for the state, their students' families, and the general public. Most also mandate some sort of statewide evaluation of the effects of the charter school legislation.

Yet this is still in the earliest and most primitive stages of development in most jurisdictions. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the sorry condition of most state assessment, evaluation, and accountability systems for public education as a whole. Still, it is not difficult to imagine the general outlines of a charter school accountability system (one, we might add, that would also work for conventional schools).

The Accountability Triad

Any well-functioning enterprise begins with a clear set of expectations. In education, these expectations were defined for many years by the Carnegie unit — such as a uniform measure of course-taking.

This "input" or "seat time" definition has begun to give way to the results-oriented approach characteristic of charter schools, one that spells out standards of student achievement, demonstrable knowledge and skills. This means setting forth what students will know

and be able to do at various checkpoints if the school does its job properly.

For standards to have a real effect, good tests and other assessments of student and school performance are needed. Good information also is required about how the education system is doing at the various levels that matter: the individual child, the school as a whole, the state, and so on.

Finally, accountability mechanisms are needed that feature real stakes and consequences for everyone involved. This implies that students should be promoted and graduate only when they have met the required standards, that universities should admit students only when they meet college-level entry norms, and that employers will do likewise.

Consequences should not apply only to students. Teachers, principals, superintendents, and other responsible adults also should be rewarded for success, penalized for failure, and perhaps dismissed if they or their institutions cannot get the job done. As the parent of a Michigan charter student remarked to us, "Charter schools cause you to work for your money. If you want my child in your school, you need to perform."

Standards, testing, and consequences — these are the three crucial parts of speech in the grammar of accountability.

More specifically, an accountability system has several aspects to it: clearly delineated content and performance standards; exams that mirror those standards; a blend of teacher-designated assessments of various types for classroom diagnosis and external tests — in-

dependent audits, really — prepared and administered by people other than the school's own managers; timely and understandable results that can be compared over time with other schools, across jurisdictions, even internationally; and additional indicators of school success, such as attendance, graduation rates, incidence of discipline problems, Advanced Placement results, and so on.

Following are several examples from sample states:

- As of January 1996, when we issued our interim first-year report, we had not seen a single state create and implement a systematic strategy for evaluating charter schools along these lines. But the situation has improved. Several states are getting their acts together with respect to the evaluation of charter schools.
- In Colorado, where the current charter law "sunsets" in mid-1998, the State Board of Education was obliged to report to the legislature by early 1997 on its evaluation of the charter program. This looming deadline, plus the availability of new federal charter school aid funds, led the board, via the State Department of Education, to issue an "RFP" in early 1996 for a statewide charter school evaluation. Though underfunded by the department, this evaluative effort is being matched (perhaps surpassed) by an ambitious self-study effort organized by the state's energetic League of Charter Schools (and also partly funded by member schools' contributions of some of their federal grants) to gather and analyze a great deal of data while encouraging and

assisting individual schools (and clusters of schools) to obtain external evaluations of their own.

- Minnesota's State Board of Education contracted with the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota to examine whether charter schools are improving student performance. An interim report released in December 1996 reported only baseline achievement data on nationally normed achievement tests as of spring 1996. On the descriptive and demographic side, the report did include a profile of every charter school in the state that documented how these "schools tend to enroll greater concentrations of students of color than host district schools," with higher average rates of students with a disability, students who are poor, and students who have limited English proficiency.
- Recent revisions to Michigan's charter law now require its department of education to conduct a statewide evaluation. This process has begun.

In what follows, we focus on the Massachusetts plan, the most systematic and promising effort to implement an accountability and evaluation plan for charter schools. We discuss it here in detail because we believe it holds great promise for what other states should consider doing to hold their charter schools — really, all their schools — accountable for student learning.

Massachusetts: A Case Study

The Massachusetts plan carefully balances two competing interests: on one hand, the state's need to hold

schools accountable for their use of public funds and their success in fostering student achievement and, on the other hand, every charter school's interest in being evaluated in a manner that is sensitive to its distinctive mission and character.

This is no simple balancing act. It led Massachusetts, on the one hand, to enumerate general questions it wants answered and some basic data that it must legitimately expect from all charter schools (enrollment, demographics, etc.). On the other hand, each Massachusetts charter school was invited to design its own evaluation and accountability plan so that it can answer these questions in a manner consistent with the school's own purpose as set forth in its charter. The following statement comes from the Massachusetts state advisory to charter schools:

> While the Secretary [of Education] is interested in gauging the effectiveness of charter schools in relation to other public schools, when it comes to the evaluation and renewal of any one charter school he is chiefly interested in its particular performance vis-à-vis its own stated mission. (Charter Schools Office 1996, p. 3)

More specifically, the Massachusetts Secretary of Education posed three central questions to guide the school's evaluation: Is its academic program a success? Is the school a viable organization? And is the school faithful to the terms of its charter?

In order to judge performance against those three general criteria, Massachusetts asked each school to:

- Develop and pursue its own clear and measurable school performance objectives;

- Measure and document its progress toward those objectives;
- Use credible student assessment tools for annually tracking student performance; and
- Annually report its objectives, progress toward them, and student assessment results, along with other required information requested by the state.

The state also reimbursed schools that opened in 1995 up to $10,000 each for costs associated with developing their evaluation measures. And it will pay an additional $6 per student for commonly used standardized tests. (When Massachusetts' new statewide assessments for public education are in place, charter school pupils will be expected to take these.)

Beginning in 1996-97, Massachusetts formalized another annual charter school evaluation activity — a site visit to augment and verify information contained in the charter school's annual report. These day-long visits are led by individuals from the charter school office of the state department of education. They involve a small group of Bay State residents who are not involved in the school, including one parent, a teacher (usually from a "regular" public school), a school leader (for example, a superintendent from a public school district), a business person, and a public official. They tour the school and meet with trustees, the school director, teachers, students, and others, guided by a protocol of essential questions.

The state also has met with charter school financial officers and business managers to discuss and jointly

determine what financial information to collect and publish. It has been agreed that, in addition to each school's annual report, there will be two other reporting requirements: a pupil and financial report (due September 15) and a year-end audit (due October 15).

. Finally, the Massachusetts Department of Education (through the Office of the Associate Commissioner for Charter Schools) has produced the first of what will be an annual state summary report of the state's charter school initiative. The attractively produced 1996 report has a narrative overview of the state's charter school enterprise, including a statistical portrait. It also contains a profile of each charter school, providing a description of the school, its mission, its origin, and basic statistical information. The student demographic profile of each charter school is compared to the profile of the local district, using the format of a bar chart. Finally, the school profile lists the standardized achievement tests used by each school. According to the Massachusetts state advisory to charter schools:

> Each school may determine for itself which kind of student assessment tools to use — standardized, alternative, external, etc. — but the Secretary will insist that every school be able to provide credible evidence of the academic progress of students. (Charter Schools Office 1996, pp. 3-4)

Other "Macro" Efforts

At the federal level the U.S. Department of Education is supporting a national study of charter schools under contract with RPP International of Berkeley, California.

Study plans include an annual survey of all charter schools, a more intensive look at the operation of a sample of charter schools, and achievement testing at a smaller sample of charter schools.

In addition to the federal and state-initiated evaluations, we have seen various studies, evaluations, and reports on charter schools nationally or in particular states. For example, the Education Commission of the States has published the results of a national survey and several policy briefs on charter schools. Both have provided limited but valuable information on these schools.

In our sample states, several research reports have been published. In California, for example, the Little Hoover Commission, an independent state agency, conducted an eight-month study of that state's charter schools. It found "many signs that these schools are meeting the needs of students, the expectations of parents and the demand of public accountability" (1996). It also included a set of recommendations to the governor, legislature, and local districts to improve the implementation of California's charter law.

Another useful and informative profile of nearly all California's charter schools was produced by Eric Premack as a project of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce Business Roundtable for Education and Charter Schools Consortium. It includes information on curriculum and instruction, student demographics, student assessment, distinguishing features and successes of these schools, and unique obstacles and challenges they face (Premack 1996).

Several studies of charter schools in California have been undertaken by WestEd, a federally funded regional education laboratory. We noted one of these in our interim project report and took exception to its "bizarre and outrageous criticism that [charter] schools expect too much involvement by parents! The allegation. . . is that requiring a great deal of parents . . . will tend to drive off weak families, single parents, the children of people who do not care much about their education." This hardly seems to be the case, as our student data suggest.

In a more recent report, WestEd provides useful descriptive information on a number of California charter schools, including evidence that dispels certain myths and portrays charter schools as indeed doing things very differently than in conventional public schools. Yet this newer report also reaches overzealous and possibly partisan conclusions. For example, it claims "modest support for the possibility that charter schools are underserving special education students." Later in the same report it calls these "only tendencies . . . [that] are not statistically significant" (Corwin and Flaherty 1995).

This leads us to suspect that parts of the WestEd analysis result from an agenda driven more by ideology and politics than by close attention to the facts. The report is a good example of how the charter school world is vulnerable to politicized policy research and evaluation. More of this is apt to occur as the number of charter schools grows and they become more threatening to the education status quo.

The Pioneer Institute, a Boston-based public policy research institute, has undertaken several data collec-

tion efforts on Massachusetts charter schools. Its July 1996 profile of the 15 charter schools operating in the state at that time includes a description of each school's educational program, student population, staff, performance, and financial position. It also contains results from a survey of parents sponsored by Pioneer showing that the primary reason cited by parents for choosing a charter school is the quality or character of its educational program. Moreover, nearly 80% of parents believe that their child's overall experience with these schools is superior to their past experience in noncharter schools (Pioneer Institute 1996).

Another useful state-specific study of charter schools comes from Arizona, where the Goldwater Institute conducted an informative survey. Almost all schools participated in the survey, as did about one-quarter of Arizona's charter school families. Though the student and family data are somewhat skewed by the latter's modest participation rate, the report contains a great deal of informative data on Arizona's bumptious and variegated crop of new (in 1995-96) charter schools and their students. Included are baseline data on academic achievement indicating that, at the dawn of their charter attendance, the youngsters in these schools scored below state and national averages on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Gifford 1996). This we take as further evidence that charter schools are not "creaming" the "best and brightest" pupils. (It also shows the extra distance that charters will have to cover in order to persuade skeptical observers that they're doing a better job academically than conventional schools.)

A 1994 report prepared by the research department of the Minnesota House of Representatives (Uhram and Stewart 1994) provided initial findings that continue to hold true. These researchers found that parents with children in the charter schools were generally satisfied with their decision to place their children in these schools. The report noted that the reasons parents chose these schools included small classes, the school's location and environment, dissatisfaction with conventional public schools, good teachers, and the chance for more parental involvement.

The "Micro" Level

As we visited charter schools around the country, we asked questions on accountability, data, and outcomes. We inquired about standards and tests, consequences for students and staff, the role of staff development within a results-oriented school strategy, the dilemmas and challenges that charters face in trying to demonstrate progress or compare themselves with other schools, etc.

We wanted to see what these schools were doing to create truly accountable education institutions. What accountability infrastructures are they developing so that they will have defensible evidence to support their continuation or expansion? Here is what we found:

- Charter school staff, students, and families — each group from its own perspective — readily and comfortably talk the language of accountability: standards, assessments, and consequences. It was rare

not to hear teachers and principals discuss their personal commitment to an education program based on world-class standards that all students are expected to achieve, tests (or portfolios, projects, performances, whatever) that appraise whether students are actually learning to those standards, and consequences for students and teachers linked to standards. For their part, families mostly expect their children to be taught a challenging, rich curriculum in a safe and caring environment. They also expect to receive regular, reliable, and "plain-speaking" information from the school on how well their children are mastering this curriculum. Though students are not usually as clear or articulate about their expectations — and some do not have a lot of use for academics in any case — a significant number voiced their desire for a challenging, rigorous, stimulating curriculum and for teachers who take an interest in whether they learn it. As one Massachusetts student said to us, "I get the same message loud and clear from each teacher: we've set world-class standards for all of you and we expect all of you to work hard to reach them."

- Discussion about accountability was neither elitist in its view of standards nor punitive in its discussion of consequences. It was founded on the bedrock belief — a core precept of almost every charter school we visited — that nearly all kids could learn to high standards, that equity requires all who want it to have this opportunity, and that students are best served by telling them the truth about what

they know and can do, provided that truth is accompanied by a caring attitude and ample help for those who need it to improve. A California principal told us, "Either we believe and act on the fact that these kids can learn to high standards or we don't. There's no in-between for me."

- Reaching high standards is exceedingly hard work for both staff and students, the more so if entering students already are academically weak due to bad educational experiences elsewhere. The following comment from a young African-American who worked as dean of students in a California charter elementary school reflects this notion: "School is the student's job. They need to learn how to work very hard and be very reliable at being students who come to school to learn. . . . [T]he staff here believes that one of our primary duties is to model this hard work and reliability."

Charter schools do not shy away from such work — and youngsters who want no part of it may be invited to enroll elsewhere. We heard a fair amount of talk about attitude as a limiting factor but very little about innate ability. Charter schools seem to us to come closer to putting into serious practice the "all kids can learn" precept than do most conventional public schools. A student in Massachusetts told us, "Teachers want all of us to learn, and they work hard at getting us to learn."

This arduous process is seen as an important part of the school's commitment to developing in students the knowledge, skills, character, and virtues needed to

succeed in today's world. This is the stuff of which real self-esteem is made. For staff, the challenge is always to find a way to help students reach the standards that have been set. As one California teacher told us, "We track students inch by inch and are always trying to figure out how to help them reach the academic standards we have for them."

Most of the schools we visited have developed — or were in the midst of developing, or knew they must promptly develop — a clear, written set of expected outcomes for their students. A few schools were a little hazy about how to do this, however, and a few had concluded that they lacked the time or talent to do it entirely "in house" and were seeking consultants or staff developers to help. Among the charter schools that already have written descriptions of their standards and desired outcomes, we found great diversity in what these are and how they are expressed. Some schools that began with an outcome statement written in general or nebulous terms are revising it into plain and more precise English. The result usually is a more refined and measurable set of student expectations. One California parent provided us with a good summary of this situation: "The curriculum is better this year than last year because it has a more clearly defined academic structure. Last year it was a bit mushy and missing some of the basics."

Charter schools use a variety of traditional and nontraditional measures to gauge whether students are learning to high standards. A Colorado charter school brochure reads, "Our goal is that the evaluation of student progress becomes primarily the responsibility of

the student." The more traditional tools include norm- or criterion-referenced multiple-choice tests of basic (and sometimes "higher order") skills. Some also include open-ended ("essay-style") questions. Nontraditional tools include all manner of portfolios, performance assessments, individual evaluations, self-reports, and teacher observations. One of the more unique involves monthly "exhibition nights," where parents and community members rate student projects and presentations offered that evening. Such ratings help determine whether students are granted mastery for the competencies in question.

The professionals in these schools generally want to be — and in every instance know that they will be — accountable for their school's and their students' results. As one California teacher told us, "You can't duck the accountability issue here. The buck stops at every teacher's desk!" Moreover, teachers expect to be free to organize themselves and deploy their resources as they see fit, knowing that their ultimate goal is for all students to learn to high standards. For them, professional development has become more than an occasional day-long workshop on some new technique. It is intimately linked to creation of the school's own curriculum, pedagogy, and accountability system. This requires that staff work at developing their content knowledge, as well as sound pedagogical methods and the materials they need for classroom use. Staff were surprisingly united in their belief that those who falter and cannot resolve their problems have no right to continue engaging in educational malpractice. They are

willing to be held accountable and welcome — indeed, actively seek — feedback from colleagues and others. A Michigan charter school teacher told us: "Teachers in this charter school are not afraid to ask others for help. We all must collectively succeed for this school to continue. It does no good hiding any weaknesses we may have."

A Dilemma

Staff and families (and some policy makers) with whom we spoke articulated the fundamental accountability dilemma faced by many charter schools. State laws that require specific assessment instruments for accountability purposes may not suit the school's own distinct mission or philosophy. Neither may the traditional survey instruments that local, state, or national organizations use to gather information. Conversely, a charter school's use of innovative assessment techniques whose reliability is not thoroughly proven may cause some to doubt their reports of academic success. In the simplest terms: what a charter school was founded to teach may not be exactly what the state (or district) tests. And the ways in which the charter school most desires to demonstrate its effectiveness may not yield the kinds of information that the larger world seeks from schools.

District and statewide management information and accountability systems typically assume that all schools within the jurisdiction are essentially identical. Seldom are they sensitive to true differences among schools.

Those with whom we spoke raised another problem with the survey approach to gathering information for accountability and evaluation purposes. The standard approach may simply collide with the school's own philosophy.

Our earlier discussion of special education is a good example of this conflict. No survey instrument based on "official" Individual Education Plans (or limited to pupils with such plans) could begin to evoke the rich variety of charter schools' approaches to the education of disabled youngsters. But there are other examples of charter school approaches that differ from conventional wisdom and standard practice and that are hard to document on traditional surveys.

Consider the abandonment by many charter schools of such conventional organization schemes as grade levels in favor of mixed-ability or performance grouping, individually paced learning, multi-age grouping, and other forms of continuous progress. Consider, too, how curriculum and time are organized in these schools. Though some charters rely on traditional subject categories, it is less common to find one — even a so-called "back to basics" school — that does not have some variation of block scheduling or devote a major portion of the day to interdisciplinary or project-based learning. Teachers may be organized into "houses" or teams that span several grade levels. They may remain with students over two or more years. Also, the organization of student learning can be dramatically different, including longer school years, more attention to academic subjects, before- and after-school tutoring,

summer studies, and so on. The administrative organization of these schools also is different, as are many of their governance mechanisms.

Conventional report and indicator systems simply cannot capture all this, nor do they deal well with other categorical services that charter schools are transforming. Standardized information systems do not elicit the fine-grained information from charter school respondents that would paint an accurate picture of what they are doing, for whom they are doing it, and how well they are succeeding.

School Failure and Its Prevention

A general rule of human nature and institutional behavior is that all new movements have failures. Charter schools are not exempt from this rule. Some charter schools will fail. A few already have. This is, of course, a great pity for their pupils and others directly affected. Yet this cloud contains an important silver lining: Charter school failures can point the way toward the kind of serious accountability system that many people believe is vital for all of U.S. public education. Schools that do not produce the necessary results have no right to continue engaging in educational malpractice. If they cannot improve, they should close. That really does happen to unsuccessful charter schools. But it remains a rare event in "regular" education.

As discussed earlier, a critical element of the "deal" between charter schools and their sponsors involves consequences for failing to achieve promised results. Retaining or renewing a charter hinges on its demonstrated performance. Retaining students from one year to the next hinges on a school's success in satisfying its

clients. This combination of market-style accountability to clients for satisfaction and "top-down" accountability to sponsors for demonstrable results is very powerful, perhaps the most potent accountability arrangement anywhere in American education.

Since the charter school movement began in Minnesota in 1991 (as of this writing), there have been only four outright charter school closures (meaning, the actual shutting down of a school — or revoking of a charter — after a school became operational): three in California and one in Arizona. Several more have been placed on probation. And a few charters have closed, gone dormant, or failed to open because of lack of students or other problems.

The first closing occurred in late 1994 when the Los Angeles Unified School District revoked the charter for Edutrain after evidence was uncovered of several problems, including fiscal mismanagement. The scandal included the lease of a $39,000 sports car and provision of a bodyguard and housing subsidy for the school president.

Such a failure naturally lends itself to use by charter opponents as evidence that the freedom given these schools makes them likely locations for quacks intent on fraud, deceit, and self-enrichment. But the Edutrain story also can be viewed as proof that the charter concept works: The school was held accountable.

Rarely does this quality control happen as swiftly and surely within "regular" public education. California charter supporters contrast the Edutrain episode with the plight of the Richmond school district near San Francisco. It filed for bankruptcy protection several

years ago and cost the state millions of dollars in unpaid debts, but it had been a widely recognized fiscal and educational disaster for many years before any action was taken. That is what one typically observes in regular school systems and conventional schools, which are seldom forced to close for even the most egregious forms of misbehavior or malpractice. One Los Angeles district official summarized the situation succinctly: "Edutrain helped more than it hurt. It was a success in disguise. It opened our eyes to a lot of issues and led to putting in place some safeguards that help us police ourselves."

We expect other charter schools to fail. Some failures will occur for educational reasons, others because of management, governance, fiscal, or business difficulties. Although we view this prospect with equanimity, there is no denying that the public relations fallout may be heavy. Opponents are eager to exploit these cases as evidence that the entire charter movement is too risky. One might suppose, therefore, that states would be preparing for this eventuality. Yet we have not found a single jurisdiction with a well-formed plan for dealing with problem schools or outright failures (though several have begun to address this issue). Few states even have an adequate monitoring program to pick up early warnings of schools in trouble.

What should be the stance of policy makers regarding charter schools that are failing or misbehaving? How much should they try to help? What interventions should they mount? What consequences should befall a faltering charter school? Should policy makers place a warning sign on the door? Bail it out? Take it over?

Our approach to this problem involves two premises. First, public authorities have an obligation to prevent or at least minimize harm to children. (That includes both the harm that comes when one's school abruptly closes and the damage caused by attending a miserable school.) Second, like any other diverse, competitive, entrepreneurial undertaking, the charter school movement must expect failures as well as successes.

Policy makers who agree with these premises should plan for two situations. One concerns charter schools experiencing problems that are serious but that need not lead to immediate failure or shutdown and thus present some hope for correction. The other involves charter schools that, for whatever reason, fail and either abruptly close down or must be shut.

To minimize the risk associated with both situations, policy makers should implement an adequate monitoring program that provides early warning signals of troubled schools. Then, obviously, they should devise a strategy for dealing with such schools, mindful always that their foremost responsibility is to minimize harm to children.

A monitoring program need not be run directly by government. An association of charter schools, for example, a state or regional think-tank, or even a university policy center might be an appropriate locus. Nor must such a program be complicated or burdensome, drowning infant charter schools in compliance paperwork. It may require little more than periodic conversations with appropriate school and community members, a phone number that people with complaints or worries can call,

a close reading of each school's annual report, and a cycle of day-long site visits once or twice a year to every charter school in the jurisdiction.

If schools are not showing the progress agreed on in their charters, or if they show signs of severe organizational or financial problems, some sort of intervention should follow. Here are five versions.

1. The school is admonished and given the opportunity to get its house in order within a specified time period. It may or may not need to change leadership to accomplish this, but such decisions remain within the school's authority. The charter sponsor's role here is to diagnose the problem, fix a deadline for solving it, and probably offer some advice, including access to technical assistance. One can think of this as a kind of probation. Arizona's State Board of Education has done this with several schools. This also has occurred in Massachusetts.

2. The charter sponsor may intervene to change the charter school's leadership. If the existing leadership cannot get the job done yet shows no signs of changing itself, the sponsor may want to force such a change. That is what happened at Darnell E-Campus Charter School in San Diego, a K-5 elementary school with approximately 570 students. It experienced a number of problems in governance and administration. The district intervened, removed the principal, appointed an acting principal, and gave the school until June 1996 to resolve nine problem areas, working with a deputy superintendent from the district. Sufficient progress had been made by June — including hiring a new principal — to warrant the district giving the school until January 1997

to request revisions in its charter and for the district to see whether the new leadership arrangements work. A San Diego business community representative commented as follows on that situation: "The school was factionalized around a couple of strong personalities and reached a stalemate in how they were going to run the school. The district was right to intervene because ultimately it's the kids whose interests are primary."

3. Particularly if there is reason to believe that the charter school is not viable over the long term for, say, financial reasons, or is about to collapse, leaving students stranded, the sponsor (or some other concerned party, such as the school governance board working with staff) may intervene by turning to a successful charter school in the area — presumably one with a similar philosophy — and inviting it to assume responsibility for the failing school. This would, in effect, create a "branch campus" of the successful school and create a basis for sustaining the formerly unsuccessful one. It is a form of "receivership" that, in effect, imposes new management on a faltering school. Such "receivership" could take other forms, including sending an "interim school director" from the sponsoring body or hiring one from outside. A version of such a friendly "takeover" occurred in San Diego when Windows Charter School was closed by the district for what the district claimed were fiscal and safety reasons. Windows turned to Guajome Park Academy Charter School in the neighboring Vista Unified School District and became one of Guajome's campuses under the umbrella of Guajome's Expeditionary Learning Center Program.

4. A charter sponsor can also revoke the charter of a school that has failed to open after a specified planning period due to the charter founders' inability to find a facility or garner enough start-up funds to start the school. The charter sponsor can then give that charter to others that it deems capable of opening a school. This happened in Michigan when Central Michigan University revoked 14 of the more than 40 charters it had granted so that the limited number of charters it has at its disposal could be given to those better able to open proposed schools. We also can conceive of a sponsor "auctioning" the charter of a failed school to other responsible parties that are capable of running it successfully.

Both "revoking" and "auctioning" charters are especially important in a state with a tight cap on how many charters a particular sponsor can offer or a tight cap on how many charters there can be in the district or state. Bidders would not offer money but, rather, evidence of serious capacity to shoulder responsibility for such a school. In the case of a failed school, the winner could assume immediate control over the school and be given the authority to restructure it in whatever manner it thought necessary.

5. The most extreme form of intervention, of course, is the immediate shutdown of a school and the orderly transfer of its students to other schools. Because of the kind of resentment, hostility, and showdowns that such a move is bound to raise — there is evidence of this in the growing list of school districts that states have taken over — so draconian a step should be taken only for serious misconduct or wrongdoing that threatens the health or safety of children.

Policy makers and chartering authorities may well develop other approaches to intervention in troubled charter schools. Our purpose is not to argue for one type of intervention over another. Indeed, we understand and respect the view of some state and local officials that charter schools should "sink or swim" in the education "marketplace" on their own, with neither life preservers nor lead weights imposed from on high.

But surely it is naive for policy makers not to contemplate the possibility of a school that sinks so fast that its pupils are stranded, possibly in the middle of a school year, or a school that may appear to be "swimming" but is in fact engaging in inappropriate actions that cannot be tolerated in a public institution.

Therefore, we believe that governing bodies that issue charters need to be prepared at least to save children in the event of school meltdown. We further believe that it is appropriate for them to adopt a "tough love" approach to failing schools: delineating areas in need of improvement, imposing deadlines, putting schools on "probation" and, when necessary, intervening more directly.

Do not, however, read this as advice to place schools on life-support systems. We already have seen worrisome evidence of elected officials beginning to think of charter schools in their district like other "pork-barrel" projects that must be kept going at all costs simply because they exist and constituents are involved. This is exactly the wrong way to think about charter schools — it destroys all vestiges of serious accountability — and it would quickly transform them into conventional

schools that are assured money and students without regard to actual performance. This "keep it going at all costs" approach is tempting to some charter school proponents. It is a temptation that must be resisted.

Conclusion

Evaluating charter schools on the "macro" and "micro" levels and holding them accountable is a big challenge for policy makers and analysts. Actually, that task comprises five distinct challenges.

First is creating an evaluation framework that focuses on results, not merely on inputs and resources. Our best advice here is to focus on the "accountability triad" (outlined at the beginning of our discussion) while recognizing the uniqueness of each charter school.

Second is specifying what indicators will yield the most suitable information about results in the charter context. Our school visits lead us to recommend that these indicators not be limited to test scores — as useful and necessary a measure as these can be. Many charter schools are proving to be creative in their use of nontraditional approaches to pupil assessment and the appraisal of school effectiveness. States should do likewise. For example, there are marketplace signals, such as how many people want to attend or work at the school. There are engagement and disengagement signals that stem from students, parents, and staff, including attendance rates, incidence of discipline problems, homework completion, and the like.

Third, there is the challenge of balancing the state's interest in holding all schools accountable in some uniform and presumably fair way against each (charter) school's interest in being evaluated in a manner consistent with its unique mission. We hope that states and schools can work together to spell out mutually agreeable ways of documenting school success (or lack thereof) on the short list of essential points about which the chartering entity legitimately wants data: whether students are learning to high academic standards in core subjects, the school's organizational viability, and the school's success at carrying out its unique mission. Related to this is the need for each state to develop and implement an adequate charter school monitoring program that includes plans for intervening in troubled schools.

Fourth, there is a methodological challenge in gathering data on charter schools: the insensitivity of conventional surveys (and tests) to valuable school-specific idiosyncrasies, characteristics that sometimes are so profound as to vitiate the relevance of an entire set of questions.

Finally, there is the analytic challenge of ensuring that reports on charter schools are as free as possible from biases and political agendas. We expect to see more dubious research as charter schools proliferate and show further signs of success. A related problem will be the temptation of some policy makers and analysts to establish a "double-standard" evaluation system in which more is expected of charter schools — for less money — than of conventional schools. In reality, we

have encountered many cases where the "playing field" is tilted against charter schools and where leveling it would mean giving them extra credit for shouldering — with meager resources — the ambitious tasks and difficult students they are taking on.

Policy makers and education reformers who believe in school accountability should welcome charter schools as a long leap forward. They establish a much-needed prototype of educational accountability. While some are behind where they should be in setting clear standards and tracking performance, they all are already accountable in two very important ways. First, they can speedily be abandoned by their clients if they do not serve their communities in ways they promised. And second, they can be closed (or not renewed) by public authorities if they do not serve their communities in the ways they promised.

The next step will be figuring out a viable means of transferring that concept of accountability into the world of conventional public schools. We encourage all who are keen to evaluate and hold charter schools accountable for results to bring similar enthusiasm to the task of holding all public schools similarly accountable. And we urge them to acknowledge the contribution that charter schools are making simply by being willing to be held responsible — and accountable — for what they do.

For these (and other) reasons, we are not much put off by the fact that some of today's charter schools are not perfect, that some will falter, and some likely will be closed. Would that this happened to more "regular" schools, too!

Not every charter school is terrific because it bears the charter label. These institutions are not immune to human frailties, to slipshod planning, to unanticipated crises and reversals of fortune. Neither are they a panacea for all that ails public education.

For the most part, though, the charter schools we came to know in the course of our study are heaven-sent options for their students, welcome professional opportunities for their teachers, bona fide educational assets for their communities and, taken as a group, a genuinely promising reform development for states and nation.

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The Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation was established on 13 October 1966 with the signing, by Dr. George H. Reavis, of the irrevocable trust agreement creating the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation Trust.

George H. Reavis (1883-1970) entered the education profession after graduating from Warrensburg Missouri State Teachers College in 1906 and the University of Missouri in 1911. He went on to earn an M.A. and a Ph.D. at Columbia University. Dr. Reavis served as assistant superintendent of schools in Maryland and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1929 he was appointed director of instruction for the Ohio State Department of Education. But it was as assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction in the Cincinnati public schools (1939-48) that he rose to national prominence.

Dr. Reavis' dream for the Educational Foundation was to make it possible for seasoned educators to write and publish the wisdom they had acquired over a lifetime of professional activity. He wanted educators and the general public to "better understand (1) the nature of the educative process and (2) the relation of education to human welfare."

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